

**Testimony of Emeka Moneme, Director
District of Columbia Department of Transportation**

Before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings
and Emergency Management

June 8, 2007

Good morning Chairwoman Norton and members of the Subcommittee. I am Emeka Moneme, Director of the District of Columbia Department of Transportation or DDOT. I thank you for the opportunity to discuss transportation options for individuals that will visit the new Capitol Visitors Center or CVC.

It is my understanding that the CVC will open in the fall of 2008. Excitement abounds about this new facility that will reflect our country's birth, growth and march into the future. Certainly, millions of families, children, students, foreign and domestic tourists, and others will flock to the CVC for many years to come. As the District of Columbia's primary agency for facilitating the safe and efficient movement of information, goods and people throughout the District, I am excited to elaborate on the transportation options DDOT is currently planning and conceptualizing for CVC visitors.

Circulator Service

The most promising transportation option we are planning for CVC visitors is the Circulator bus. As you are aware, Circulator bus service was launched in 2005 as an innovative, attractive, environmentally-friendly, inexpensive, hop-on/hop-off transit service throughout the downtown area and between downtown and other critical District neighborhoods and destination

points. DDOT and the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) jointly manage and operate the service. Currently, the Circulator offers (3) routes:

- The Georgetown – Union Station Route;
- The Convention Center – SW Waterfront Route; and
- The Smithsonian – National Gallery of Art Loop.

Since establishing the service, we have witnessed ridership steadily increase. To date, the Circulator has served 3,530,228 riders, and last month our fleet served 203,143 riders, which is an 11% increase over the May 2006 ridership totals.

DDOT and its Circulator partners are planning an extension of the current Smithsonian – National Gallery of Art Loop to serve the CVC in time for its projected opening. The existing route circles the National Mall. The proposed extension would expand the present route eastward to encompass the U.S. Capitol Complex and include a stop at the main entrance of the CVC. This expansion would offer a convenient, seamless transit option for visitors to enjoy the CVC and the numerous sites and activities along the National Mall.

Second, DDOT plans to operate a new Union Station-CVC-Navy Yard Route that would also service the new CVC. This new line could replace the existing WMATA Metrobus N22 route to avoid duplicative Circulator and WMATA Metrobus service. The initial stop on this line from Union Station would be the CVC. As planned, this route would offer a DIRECT, frequent, easily-accessible transit link between Union Station and the CVC. We strongly believe that the success and effectiveness of this proposed route is contingent upon the re-opening of 1st Street, between Constitution Avenue and C Street – the portion of 1st Street that runs between the

Russell and Dirksen Senate Office Buildings. And as such, we look forward to continued dialogue with the U.S. Capitol Police and the Architect of the Capitol on this matter.

Union Station-CVC-Navy Yard Corridor Streetcar

Yet another potential transportation option for CVC visitors is a Union Station-CVC-Navy Yard Corridor Streetcar line. This streetcar line would complement Circulator service and could offer a direct transit link to the CVC for those traveling on the WMATA Metrorail Green Line. This service is only in the concept phase but is certainly a reality in the foreseeable future as DDOT will begin Streetcar service in other areas of the District as soon as the fall of 2008.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements

Lastly, we recognize that many visitors may want to enjoy the CVC after or in the midst of a pleasant stroll or bike outing. As so, DDOT is prepared to work with the Architect of the Capitol and other CVC planners to assist in designing and constructing needed pedestrian and bicycle path improvements adjacent to the CVC. Without question, DDOT encourages and promotes walking and bicycling as a viable transportation option for residents and visitors and works continuously to foster a safe pedestrian and bicycling environment. I would also note that DDOT and other partners are currently planning a Bicycle Center at Union Station which would complement any bicycle path improvements throughout the U.S. Capitol Complex.

As we anticipate an immediate, steady and extremely large number of visitors to the CVC upon its opening, I stress the importance of implementing these proposed transportation solutions for CVC visitors, particularly, the transit services connecting the CVC and Union Station, which

serves as the District's primary intermodal transportation center. A recent Roll Call editorial highlights the need to further strategize about how we will handle tour bus traffic around the Capitol and facilitate the movement of visitors in and out of the CVC. The planned Circulator service and potential streetcar line would offer safe and efficient transportation options and reduce the need for tour bus traffic to travel in the vicinity of the U.S. Capitol Complex.

Circulator Costs

The annual costs of operating the extended Smithsonian – National Gallery of Art Loop are estimated at approximately \$1.4 million. Service for this route would be seasonally adjusted with more frequent service offered during the high tourist season from March to October and reduced service from October to March. The annual costs of operating the new Union Station-CVC-Navy Yard Route are estimated at approximately \$2.0 million. We are presently working to design an exact route alignment and schedule for this new service. Please note that the aforementioned costs are solely projected operational costs, and do not include the additional funding needed to purchase and equip additional vehicles for the proposed service. DDOT has pursued federal funding to support Circulator service and we are also contemplating revenue generating partnerships with corporate entities. We welcome the assistance of the Subcommittee in securing funding.

Crucial Considerations

Let me end my remarks by highlighting a few obvious but crucial points:

- (1) The development of the Union Station Intermodal Transportation Center will have a significant impact on future Circulator service to the CVC. Tour bus parking accommodations, streetcar integration and convenient on and off boarding at Union

Station will encourage utilization of the Circulator as a preferred transit option to the CVC;

- (2) Again, the re-opening of 1st Street between Constitution Avenue and C Street is crucial to the success of the planned Union Station – CVC – Navy Yard Circulator route;
- (3) Continuous communication and coordination with the Architect of the Capitol and U.S. Capitol Police is must to ensure the smooth operation of transit services around the Capitol;
- (4) Securing operational and capital funding is challenging and additional funding is needed to implement the planned transit services to accommodate CVC visitors

I thank you for the opportunity share DDOT's plans with you. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee, the Architect of the Capitol, the U.S. Capitol Police, and others to ensure that the countless visitors that come to Washington, DC to enjoy the new Capitol Visitors Center will have adequate and convenient transportation options. I welcome any questions you may have.